

## ***FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET***

**Meeting Date:** July 10, 2013

**Agenda Item:** York Gulch Road Easement Project

**Division:** Wildlife

**Action Needed:** Endorse Course of Action

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 10 minutes

**Background:** In 2005, The Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks (FWP) Foundation acquired 287 acres of contiguous patented mining claims through a donation, with the intent of re-conveying the property to the Helena National Forest when purchase monies became available. The Black Bear Road that accesses the property is the principle access to the York Gulch area and surrounding Helena National Forest lands, but due to multiple small parcels of private land consisting of old mining claims along this route, legal public access to the Foundation property and USFS land beyond does not currently exist. Prickly Pear Land Trust, the Forest Service, and Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks (FWP) Foundation are pursuing legal access on approximately 2.5 miles of road across 24 tracts of land held under 14 different landowners.

### **Public Involvement Process & Results**

An EA and subsequent public involvement is presently under development, pending FWP Commission endorsement.

### **Alternatives and Analysis**

Proposed Action: FWP proposes to assist with this purchase of permanent road access easements from willing landowners across private land to provide year-round permanent public access to this large amount of national forest land. FWP funding is contingent upon successful negotiation of easements from ALL willing landowners.

No Action alternative: FWP would forgo the opportunity to assist with this purchase of needed access easements, which would greatly reduce the likelihood that public access to this large tract of national forest land would be secured.

### **Agency Recommendation & Rationale**

FWP recommends approval by the FWP Commission to proceed with the public access road easements development, negotiation and purchase with willing landowners.

### **Proposed Motion**

I move the FWP Commission endorse the recommendation to begin negotiations for permanent public access road easements to provide public access to land administered by the Helena National Forest.